

Snow and ice control at USAG Grafenwoehr

Community can assist, be aware of risks associated this winter

Record snowfall, shortage of salt create dangerous road conditions

Snow and ice control is the biggest challenge for the DPW workforce, especially this year. In addition to the early start of the winter and record levels of snowfall, Germany (including the USAG Grafenwoehr area) is experiencing a shortage of salt, which is used to keep roads from ice and snow. USAG Grafenwoehr, as well as surrounding communities including Nuremberg, are currently out of salt. The Autobahn and the Bundesstrassen within Germany have priority and all current salt deliveries are being directed there.

The next salt delivery to the USAG Grafenwoehr is confirmed for the second week in January. This salt will be delivered from Romania and is transported by ship on the Danube River (Donau). Ice on this major stream could delay this delivery. Also, because of the increased demand, the price has tripled.

Snow and Ice removal crew

The DPW snow and ice removal crews on Main Post and at Rose Barracks presently consist of 66 workers to operate a large fleet of snow plowing equipment like unimogs, tractors or dump trucks equipped with snow plows and supported by graders or loaders. In addition to these in-house services, a contractor is responsible for the Army Airfield Grafenwoehr and the TA-1 Road to Netzaberg and the Village Center. The main roads at Netzaberg are maintained by the City of Eschenbach and the individual housing areas are the responsibility of the "Hausverwaltung."

The USAG snow and ice removal plan, which is approved by the command, gives us clear directives for the main priorities that have to be addressed first and our crews are directed to the high traffic/high risk roads and parking areas of the community for the application of salt and removal of snow, in order to reduce the risk in these areas. Once these areas are acceptable, the crews are able to move on to secondary roads and parking areas. If the snow continues, or if the temperatures are conducive to the continued development of black ice, our crews will be directed back to the high risk areas to treat them again.

The USAG DPW snow and ice removal team provides 24/7 on-call services. Snow operation begins regularly at 4 a.m. or earlier if called in by the Emergency Operation Center (EOC). The DPW Buildings and Grounds snow and ice removal team takes the lead. However, during continuous snow fall and essential night operations a critical aspect is physical stress of the team members and, therefore, the success of the overall mission can only be granted with the partnership of our tenant organizations and adjacent communities. The support of each customer to keep his or her building entrances and walkways free of snow and ice also helps DPW stay on top of its mission.

Plowing priorities

The sequence of priorities for the morning's snow removal process is as follows:

1. The public / main roads
2. Dangerous crossings
3. Declining roads
4. Official locations, i.e. clinics, schools, Exchange and commissary.

At this time, all roads are plowed and the majority of the parking lots are within acceptable conditions. The road conditions are still critical since ice cannot be removed without salt. Careful driving is a must to avoid accidents. Cars should only be used if really necessary and should be equipped with good winter tires, which are mandatory in Germany.

Plow responsibilities

The German city council (i.e. Eschenbach) road crew is responsible for all public roads. DPW plows on-post roads and fenced in areas in the housing area (i.e. schools). The Hausmeister for Government

Leased Housing is responsible for plowing other roads (i.e. ring roads). Only after the main roads are cleared will the Hausmeister (Government Leased Housing) start removing the snow from sidewalks and parking lots within the housing areas.

Please be aware this is a lengthy process and can last up till noon in extreme weather conditions. At times of heavy snow accumulation the Hausmeisters hire additional contractors with heavy equipment to pick up excess snow and drive it out of the housing areas.

Should the occupants of Government Leased Housing still have problems with the snow after all the crews are done — and they exhausted their own resources — they may call the housing office for further assistance. The Hausmeisters will respond to all requests but please be aware that, should he have a backlog of orders to fulfill, he will not be able to respond immediately.

Community support

Trash removal from snowed-in recycling centers is another facing issue. The settled snow impedes the moving of the recycling containers or makes it completely impossible. Assistance in cleaning individual recycling center from snow is greatly appreciated. At Rose Barracks small individual trash bins are placed at the curb for pick-up. When emptied, these should be returned immediately to allow snow removal on the road.

In addition, the community can aid by putting away shopping carts from AAFES / DECA so parking lots may be cleared and keeping walkways and driveways clean. In housing areas, all Soldiers, civilians and family members should lend a helping hand and remove snow and ice from entrance steps, parking lots and walkways leading to one's own residence. Acceptable de-icing material and snow shovels are available at Self-Help.

Please think safe and be patience during this critical winter period without salt.